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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HONG KONG 000522

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/CM

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SENV](#) [CH](#) [HK](#)

SUBJECT: MACAU TO ESTABLISH ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION BUREAU

Classified By: CONSUL GENERAL JOE DONOVAN. REASONS: 1.4 (B,D)

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR) is expected to formally establish a new Environmental Protection Bureau (EPB) on June 1. The EPB will fall under the direction of the Secretary for Transport and Public Works and be responsible for environmental planning, regulation and enforcement, and will manage Macau's environmentally-sensitive infrastructure, including waste water treatment facilities and a publicly-owned incinerator.  
END SUMMARY

¶2. (SBU) COMMENT: The establishment of the Environmental Protection Bureau is a significant step forward in the Macau Government's plan to improve its environmental protection capabilities and position itself as a "green" city. Upgrading the existing Environmental Council to Bureau status will increase both the profile of environmental issues and the new Bureau's ability to propose and implement initiatives to improve the quality of life for local residents. Macau hopes to use an improved image and its historic ties to Portugal to link the territory to environmental activists and companies in the EU, drawing trade and investment by marketing itself as an environmentally-friendly gateway into China. END COMMENT.

Establishing the Environmental Protection Bureau  
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¶3. (C) The President of the Macau Environmental Council, Vong Man Hung, told us on March 13 that Secretary for Transportation and Public Works Lau Si-Io had confirmed that the new Environmental Protection Bureau (EPB) will formally stand up on June 1. The Environmental Council will be disbanded on that date and the 21 Council staff members will be rolled into the EPB. Even though the draft legislation for the EPB is still with the Legislative Assembly, Secretary Lau told the Macau press that he fully expected the bill to pass without difficulty. Vong said the Environmental Council has begun planning for the transition to take place on that date.

¶4. (C) Vong said the new EPB will, at least initially, fall under the authority of the Secretary for Transportation and Public Works. According to Vong, the EPB will be broadly responsible for pollution control and monitoring, environmental planning, regulation, and enforcement, environmental education and outreach, and managing public environmentally oriented infrastructure such as the waste water treatment plant and Macau's trash incinerator. Vong said the EPB will also be responsible for designating and managing environmentally sensitive zones, including an already established 15 hectare ecological zone located next to the Venetian Hotel and Casino, currently home to approximately 15 endangered Black-faced Spoonbills.

The Future of Environmental Protection in Macau  
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¶5. (C) Vong said that the establishment of the EPB has been a goal of environmental groups in Macau since 1990 and is an important milestone. But the MSAR is still at the beginning of efforts to build environmental awareness and implement programs. Despite this, Vong said she expects the EPB to make a significant difference and hopes it will turn Macau into a "green dot" on the coast of mainland China. The EPB will work hard to promote Macau as an eco-friendly community with close ties to southern China, Vong said. In addition to building environmental awareness through outreach to the public and business community, the initial focus of the EPB will be on regulations to reduce noise pollution, increasing Macau's capacity to deal with hazardous waste and efforts to reduce vehicle emissions.

¶6. (SBU) In a separate meeting, the Director for Energy Sector Development, Arnaldo Santos, confirmed the MSAR's commitment to making Macau an environmentally friendly city and broadly discussed the importance of using a "green" image and historic links to the EU as a way to market Macau to environmental activists and environmentally-oriented companies as a gateway to China. Macau will begin testing a limited number of LPG-fueled vehicles in the government fleet and will begin laying pipeline this summer to bring natural gas to residential and commercial customers in the city, in an effort to reduce emissions. According to Santos, Macau plans to install a natural gas pipeline grid that will cover 80% of Macau's residents within five years and will completely cover the MSAR within 10 years. In addition to reducing emissions, the natural gas pipelines will also address a significant public safety concern by reducing the

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ubiquitous use of bottled gas as a cooking fuel, the movement and storage of which is a significant fire hazard.  
DONOVAN